

## **Should I be concerned about stress around the holidays?**

The holiday season is fast approaching and with it comes a whirlwind of shopping, decorating, baking, and gift giving. Although the holidays are portrayed as a wondrous time of year, they can also trigger stress in parents and children. Families can beat the holiday pressure by deciding what they value the most during this time of year and planning activities that allow for some rest and relaxation. Parents are encouraged to remember that small children develop routines and that although they will most likely become disrupted, attempting to keep as much consistency as possible will ultimately reduce your child's stress level. As time runs thin and the "to do" list grows, the abundance of sugary sweets prevails and nutritious meals are often placed aside. Parents are encouraged to plan one healthy family meal a day. This will also provide an opportunity to spend time together, talk, and relax.

Family traditions are often an important part of the holiday season; offering comfort, support, and security when everything else seems to be chaotic. Families are encouraged to cherish one another's company and create memories that your children will treasure as they enter into adulthood. Parents are encouraged to enlist their children in accomplishing holiday tasks, such as helping with the baking and cleaning, when age appropriate. The holiday season does not have to lead to stress and exhaustion. With a little preparation and a focus on what's important, the holidays can live up to their reputation.